Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

March 18, 2015

Media Contact: April Ward
(202) 226-8477

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Scott Perry (R-PA)
Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency

"Unmanned Arial System Threats: Exploring Security Implications and Mitigation Technologies"

Remarks as Prepared

When most people think of unmanned aerial systems (UAS), commonly known as "drones", they think of large aircraft used in overseas combat operations; however, in the coming years, the majority of UAS will be small—55 pounds or less—some of which fly less than 400 feet above the ground. Small UAS have a variety of potential uses, such as pipeline, utility, and farm inspections, aerial photography, and crop dusting, among others. Last month, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) released proposed rules to allow for operation of small UAS for non-recreational purposes into domestic airspace. The proposed rules would place numerous limitations on flying small UAS: flights could take place only in daylight, the area of operations would be limited, and only visual-line-of-sight operations would be permitted. These proposed rules now are open for public comment. Our hearing today will focus on the security implications of opening our skies to small UAS and how agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), federal, state, and local law enforcement should prepare.

Several recent security incidents are concerning. In January, a small quadcopter crashed on the White House lawn. Although the incident seemingly was accidental, it exposed the larger issue of how law enforcement should respond to UAS threats and, subsequently, the Secret Service quickly scheduled exercises in the D.C. area in response. Next, a September 2013 incident where a small UAS landed only inches away from German Chancellor Angela Merkel also exposed serious concerns and the challenge that protective services around the world now face. Last but not least, French police recently were confounded when several unidentified small UAS flew over key Paris landmarks, including the Eiffel Tower as well as nuclear power plants. French authorities are investigating, but again, this incident showcases the challenges for law enforcement to respond swiftly to this new technology.

Threats posed by small UAS are nothing new. For example, an individual was arrested in September 2011 after a failed plot to attack the U.S. Capitol and Pentagon using multiple remote controlled aircraft laden with explosives. But nightmare scenarios by terrorists aren't the only concern. Drug smugglers

could use this technology as a cheap way to smuggle illegal drugs into the U.S., and spies may also use small drones to get into areas we would prefer hidden.

So the question is: how can homeland security and law enforcement prepare for these potential threats? In July 2012, this Committee held a hearing highlighting the need to address the security risks associated with UAS. In the past three years, the Department of Homeland Security has taken some steps to educate law enforcement and the public on small UAS. The National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) released a model aircraft reference aid to inform the public about potential illicit uses, impacts, and indicators of malicious activity. The Science and Technology Directorate has been assessing the capabilities of small UAS for state and local law enforcement and first responders. However, much more needs to be done to safeguard against malicious actors successfully using this technology for illegal means. The Department of Homeland Security needs a cohesive strategy to address these issues.

Lone wolf terrorists, drug smugglers, and foreign spies don't care about FAA rules. DHS must help protect against these bad actors perverting this technology for their objectives. Testimony from our witnesses today will help provide a roadmap for what homeland security and law enforcement can do to mitigate this risk. Specifically, we need a better understanding of the technological solutions that exist to deal with these threats and what law enforcement needs to better respond when a small UAS is used for illegal activity. I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses on their assessment of the threats and potential solutions.

###